



**DATE:** November 6, 2008

**TO:** CVRC Board of Directors

**VIA:** Eric Crocket, Assistant Director, Redevelopment & Housing 

**FROM:** Ken Lee, Principal Project Coordinator 

**SUBJECT:** 2009-2011 US EPA Brownfields Grant

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#### INTRODUCTION

This information memo provides an update to the CVRC on the status of the Redevelopment Agency's recently awarded US EPA Brownfields Grant. Staff is continuing to refine the grant work plan and is proposing to hire SCS Engineers to assist in implementing the work plan. Grant implementation is tentatively set to begin in December 2008.

#### BACKGROUND

One of the major programs that a redevelopment agency can undertake is the assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment of contaminated sites known as "brownfields" properties. Successful brownfields programs, however, require a significant investment of upfront resources, including both time and money. To secure "seed money" for creating a brownfields program in Chula Vista, Redevelopment & Housing staff prepared and submitted a proposal last year to US EPA to receive federal grant dollars. In 2008, US EPA awarded a total of \$74 million in grant funding to 1,255 nationally competitive recipients located in 43 states across the country. The Chula Vista Redevelopment Agency was one of those recipients and was selected by US EPA to receive two Community-wide Brownfields Assessment grants.

#### EPA BROWNFIELDS GRANT

During a three-year period, the grants will provide \$200,000 to assess properties for hazardous substances and another \$200,000 to assess properties for petroleum contaminants. The \$400,000 in combined funds will facilitate the creation and marketing of a brownfields program in Southwest Chula Vista and will provide free brownfields services to property and business owners in the area. Brownfields services will assist owners in addressing environmental roadblocks that may be hindering business growth

and expansion or improved uses of their properties. The study area for the grant is the entire seven-square mile area of Southwest Chula Vista, consistent with the General Plan's Southwest Planning Area boundaries and the geographic focus of the City's community building efforts in the Southwest (Southwest United in Action).

Successful implementation of the EPA grant will provide much-needed assistance and relief to property owners and small businesses in Southwest Chula Vista and lead to greater funding opportunities in the future, including other federal and state grants. Future funding and expansion of the brownfields program could help pay for actual cleanup and redevelopment of properties, and replication of the program in other parts of the City (e.g., Urban Core, Bayfront).

#### SEEDING A LOCAL PROGRAM

EPA Community-wide Assessment Grants provide funding for the following activities:

- Property, business owner, and community outreach and involvement.
- Development of an area-wide inventory (e.g., GIS database) of brownfields properties in the study area.
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessments of candidate brownfields properties.
- Phase II Environmental Site Assessments of candidate brownfields properties.
- Remediation and reuse planning of candidate brownfields properties.
- Compliance with EPA grant requirements.

EPA's intent for these grants is for local communities to use the funds to "seed" local brownfields programs that can be sustained into the future. Likewise, it is staff's intent to use the RDA's EPA grant funds to create a sustainable program that can provide ongoing financial and environmental benefits to property/business owners and the general community. Since EPA Assessment Grants can only be used to study brownfields properties and cannot be used to physically clean up sites, strategic implementation of the grants is necessary to help local communities identify and secure additional funding for remediation activities. Staff will therefore be collaborating with an experienced environmental consulting team to develop a comprehensive strategic approach to the assessment grant that will ultimately provide the greatest level of assistance to property and business owners.

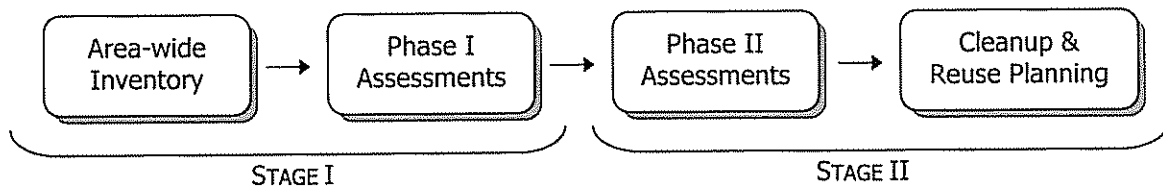
#### ENVIRONMENTAL SITE ASSESSMENTS

A preliminary work plan for the grant was submitted to EPA in June that proposes to conduct Phase I assessments for approximately 24-30 properties in the area. A Phase I involves historical research of past land uses on a site and interviews with owners/personnel to determine the likelihood that the site is a brownfields property. The work plan then

proposes to conduct Phase II assessments for up to 10 properties, based on the Phase I findings and other criteria. A Phase II involves the collection and testing of physical material (e.g., soil, groundwater) from a site to determine the extent of contamination. No specific sites have been identified for assessment under the grant.

### SCS ENGINEERS

To help the RDA carry out these extremely technical tasks, staff initiated an intensive, two-month long RFQ/P process in July for an environmental consulting firm to assist the RDA in the implementation of the first stage of the grant.



Staff reviewed proposals from 11 reputable firms and held interviews with six. A three-member interview panel was convened consisting of two Redevelopment & Housing staff and a community relations expert from the County of San Diego's Health & Human Services Agency. SCS Engineers was selected by the panel as the top firm for recommendation to the RDA. The team at SCS Engineers possesses in-depth experience, skills, and other qualifications that are unique to EPA grants and the strategic challenges of creating a new brownfields program from the ground-up.

### CONCLUSION

Brownfields activities will increasingly become an important part of redevelopment efforts in western Chula Vista. Seeding a successful program will help pave the way for revitalization efforts by reducing risks for property owners, businesses, and developers. Staff will continue to provide periodic updates to the CVRC and seek input on the strategic development of a sustainable brownfields program in Chula Vista.